

PIONEER PASTORS' WIVES CHOSE THE ROLE OF SERVICE
or

"A Noble But Often Difficult Calling"

by

Kaarina and Raymond Wargelin

This paper seeks to describe the development of a role model for the wives of pastors who served the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America or Suomi Synod. It will trace the historical beginning of the model and its modification as the Synod became established. We learn the reasons why these women developed such a high degree of involvement in parish activities and how they managed to cope with their problems of identity and stress.

Initially (from 1876 to 1906) the pastors' wives were born in Finland. There is one exception to this generalization; the wife of a founding pastor (Rhoda Friestedt-Hoikka, of Swedish extraction) was born in New Sweden, Iowa. Forty-one of these women had married their husbands in Finland while the majority were American-born but of Finnish extraction. ⁽¹⁾ By 1962 (when the Suomi Synod entered the new Lutheran Church in America) out of a total of 202 pastors' wives which we can account for, only nineteen were of non-Finnish extraction. Eight were women of Swedish extraction, five were of German extraction, three were of Norwegian extraction and one each were of Swiss, French, Hungarian and Japanese extraction. ⁽²⁾

It would be natural to assume that the role model for Suomi Synod pastors' wives would be one that was brought from Finland. While this is true in part, the role model became immediately changed because of the radically different social circumstances prevailing among immigrant Finns in America. The pastor's wife of the late 19th century Church of Finland was known as "pastorska." She could not have possibly fit into the newly constituted Finnish society prevailing in Finnish immigrant communities of the United States. The "pastorska" was the wife of the tenured chief pastor of a Church of Finland congregation. Her husband was called "kirkkoherra", which literally translated meant "Lord of the Church." In the society of late 19th century Finland he was the conscience of the community and the legitimizer of accepted civil and moral behavior. He and his colleagues provided the moral undergirding for an authoritarian government as well as support for the prevailing establishment in the local community. The "pastorska" had no functions to perform in the local congregation, but she did enjoy a position of social distinction among the members of the local establishment.

Suomi Synod pastors' wives commenced their life in the United States in a society which was decidedly less rigidly structured than in Finland. Finnish immigrants in late 19th century USA had become socially and politically sensitized before leaving Finland which made them alert to resisting everything that appeared to be a reestablishment of customs and practices which had irritated them in their past. The image of the privileged position of the "kirkkoherra" and "pastorska" had been clearly stamped upon the minds of all

immigrant Finns.

The modest parsonage homes of pioneer Suomi Synod pastors' wives were located in frontier communities where the restraints of conventional society were barely observed. They were communities characterized by harsh working conditions, occupational hazards and low pay. There was also much drinking and fighting in saloons. These saloons were frequently the chief socializing centers of the communities. There both men and women gave expression to their delight in freedom from restraint. Both Salomon Ilmonen and Kalle Potti commented on these social conditions, the aforementioned in terms of concern and the latter in a humorous manner. (3) & (4)

Suomi Synod pioneer pastors' wives immediately adopted a service role model; service to home, church and community. It was fortunate that both the pastors and wives of that era were all young and adaptable people. The pastors and wives who came to serve the immigrants were untenured ("without permanent calls in the Church of Finland). Being young and untenured they had not become conditioned to the hierarchically entrenched status enjoyed by the "kirkkoherra and pastorska." The lot of the untenured pastor and wife in Finland was to go from one unofficial position to another with very short periods of service most everywhere. This circumstance meant that the untenured pastor and wife were young and very malleable at this stage of their life. Furthermore, it meant that they had already had experience in making adjustments and getting along. The impact on the lives of pastoral couples who did serve in the United States and who had returned to the Church of Finland was frequently easily recognizable since they continued to manifest a refreshing openness and relaxed manner upon taking up service in the Church of Finland. (5)

Pioneer Suomi Synod pastors' wives commenced their role in ecclesiastical conditions which were distinctly less structured than they were in Finland. Church polity developed different as a result of the conditions and pressures which characterized pioneer Finnish immigrant society. It also needs to be noted that alienation from the traditional church had become a way of life for the majority of pioneer Finns in America. (6) This alienation was not merely a matter of forsaking the church of their forebearers; it was a separation from Christianity altogether. This development took place shortly after the Suomi Synod was founded. In quite a few parts of the United States the Finnish congregations were completely wiped out. (7)- by the rising tide of Finnish Socialism.

Pastors' spouses were inevitably drawn into active roles in the congregations and communities in which their husbands served, particularly in the communities in which the parsonage was located. The congregations were small and struggling. Leadership was in short supply. The people were inexperienced. Furthermore, the pastor's wife invariably had more education and social experience not only in comparison to the women but also in comparison with the men. The talents of the pastor's wife were needed in assisting the Sunday School, the "Summer School", women's work and the church music. Furthermore, the participation of the pastor's spouse was strategic in reaching families of varied ideologies with a warm evangelical approach. Parsonages, instead of being austere and highly private, became focal points of congregational activity. First plans for forming women's organizations were commonly made in parsonage homes. The church office was in the parsonage which meant that the pastor's wife also met the visitors who had business with the pastor. Arrangements for weddings, baptisms, funerals were made at the parsonage and most weddings and baptisms were performed in the simple but neat "front room!" It was not uncommon for the pastor's wife to serve a tray of steaming coffee, "nisu" and cookies to the visitors for whom the sundry rites had been performed. (8)

The two women who were the very earliest pastors' wives were Rhoda Hoikka and Aliisa Tolonen. Pastor Jakob J. Hoikka brought his American-born Swedish wife to Astoria, Oregon in 1883 where he commenced his work among Swedes and Finns. Rhoda Elizabeth Hoikka never learned to speak Finnish, but she entertained her husband's guests and played for the Finnish as well Swedish services in the congregations her husband served. On the other hand, Aliisa Tolonen and her husband, Pastor Leonard Tolonen, commenced their work in Bethel Lutheran of Ishpeming, Mich. in January 1886. Aliisa is remembered as a very active and helpful pastor's wife in this parish which became one of the strongest in the Suomi Synod. Lauri Ahlman memorialized Aliisa Tolonen and her work in Bethel congregation in the 40th Anniversary Album of the Suomi Synod. (9) Aliisa Tolonen is the original role model of the Suomi Synod pastor's wife.

Another example of the pioneer model pastor's wife is found in Ohio. This was Liisi Kivioja of Bethany Lutheran in Ashtabula Harbor, Ohio. She assisted her husband in many ways; e.g. by reaching people in the midst of the very difficult social conditions prevailing in that community during its early years. She is known to have assisted in the founding of a temperance society whose ostensible objective was to draw men

and women away from the atmosphere of saloon dances held in ("Happy") Ashtabula Harbor. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Upon her return (and her husband) to Finland she was elected a member of the first unicameral parliament of Finland in 1907. ⁽¹¹⁾

The role model for pastors' wives in the Suomi Synod was clearly established by early 1900. The image of the pastor's spouse, active not only as a homemaker but involved in the activities of the parish, was also strongly affirmed by subsequent spouses at the turn of the century. They were Valma Salovaara, Tekla Airaksinen, Hanna Varmavuori, Elin Ahlman, Mrs Hannes Leiviska, Ida Ronka, Naima Hohenthal and Elizabeth Wuornos. ⁽¹²⁾

By 1906, when the spouses of the first pastors (trained and ordained by the Synod) occupied parsonages in the Synod, the established role model was followed faithfully. Our research has also been done in congregational, conference and synodical minutes, synodical publications and newspapers. These sources all affirmed that the original model continued unchanged. The traditional model continued unchanged through the language conflicts, increased education and living standards. It wasn't until the late 1940s and early 1950s that some diminishing of conformity to the traditional role model became observable. The PASTOR'S WIFE, a journal produced quarterly by the Sisterhood of Suomi Synod pastors' spouses, has also been used extensively in order to trace the status and nature of the role model. Last of all a questionnaire was circulated in 1987 among pastors' wives and widows still living, as well ^{as} spouses whose husbands are still active in the ministry of the Lutheran Church. Questionnaires were also shared with the adult descendents of pastors' wives who have departed this life. The results of this questionnaire are shared at the end of this paper.

VARIETIES OF SERVICES RENDERED BY PASTORS' WIVES

There are three categories of services: I. Congregational; II. Synodical and III. Community

I. Congregational Services.

It needs to be understood that in no instances did Suomi Synod pastors' wives displace or threaten male domination in early congregations. Suomi Synod women received the right to vote in congregations and synodical conventions in 1909, two years after women's suffrage had been granted in Finland. ⁽¹³⁾ They served because of the great need for the kind of leadership they could provide and because of their educational advantages. The earliest Finnish immigrants generally had only the equivalent of the Kiertokoulu (literally: circulating school) education.

EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGES OF SUOMI SYNOD PASTORS' WIVES (14)

WIVES BORN IN FINLAND

(1890 to 1906)

Folkschool (Kansakoulu)--all

Lyceé many

(1906 through 1962)

Lyceé 29

Jatko Opisto (collegiate).4

University.....6

Nurses training.....3

Missionary education...6

Musical training.....3

Business management.....1

WIVES BORN IN THE USA

(1906 to 1962)

High School.....all (142)

Suomi Junior College.....66

Nurses training..... 6

Vocational colleges (Finland)..3

Professional musical educ.----13

Collegiate education.....34

Secretarial studies.....27

Business management.....2

A. Educational Services

Suomi Synod publications reveal that both Sunday Schools and Summer Schools were established in the very earliest period of the Suomi Synod. - They also reveal that pastors' wives were involved from the very beginning in these programs as leaders and teachers. (15) These women were known for their high motivation and desire to improve the parish education programs of congregations. (16) Their husbands, the pastors, frequently entrusted the entire parish education program completely to their wives' attention.

Elma Krym, a leader in women's work in the Synod, paid high tribute to pastors' wives for their work in parish education with these words, "As a teacher and a Christian, pastors' wives have been and continue to be examples for the growing youth without realizing the long-time effect of their work." (17) Pastors' wives frequently wrote valuable articles on parish education for the Synod publications encouraging church members to greater diligence and patience in Christian education. (18) This high commitment to parish education carried over into the Lutheran Church in America. Martha Saarinen-Asuma, reared in a Suomi Synod parsonage, wife of an ELCA pastor, is coordinator of parish services in a large central Wisconsin parish. (19)

B. WOMEN'S AUXILIARIES

1. Ladies Aid or Sewing Circles

Photo albums found in traditional Suomi Synod homes portrayed vividly the leadership role that the typical Suomi Synod pastor's wife played in Ladies Aid societies and Sewing Circles of a bygone era. Elma Krym's comment on this area of women's work is revealing. "The pastor spoke occasionally at

these Ladies Aid societies which were held in homes as well as churches. Most of the time the women provided their own program. The pastor's wife, however, was always along in some leading capacity." (20) Just how "leading" can be gathered from the role that pastor's spouse, Hannah Hillila, played in reorganizing the Ladies Aid activity in Suomi Zion Lutheran congregation of Fairport Harbor, Ohio. This congregation of 1,400 souls had two ladies aids, one in Fairport and the other in the near-neighboring community of Paynesville. Hannah Hillila persuaded the women in the two organizations to unify the women's work in the congregation by creating 26 regional committees which included all the women of the congregation. This meant that each committee (of roughly 20 each) served as the hospitality committee twice a year for the every-Wednesday evening Ladies Aid-directed devotional and business meeting at the church parlors. The suggestion was approved and the result was that some 500 women of the congregation became actively involved. Inner mission concerns (e.g. the sick, the shut-ins, the social concerns) of the congregation were reviewed at each Wednesday night meeting. Project committees were appointed to strategize how relief could be brought to members in particular needs. An unemployed rheumatoid farmer, whose family lived in a partly completed house, had his home completed (inside and out; siding, roofing, painting and interiorizing) on one Saturday by 80 women and men of the congregation. (21)

Pastors' wives participated in the money-raising projects of "ompeluseura" (original name of the Ladies Aid Society). Her participation in these activities was important from the point of morale. It has been said that these women's financial projects were the chief source of income for the struggling congregations of the pioneer era. The bazaars and dinners were also great social events, not only for the congregation but also for the community. The "money plate" was used for the coffee table following Ladies Aid meetings. The "pasty" (meat pies) projects of the typical Suomi Synod women played a most significant role in funding projects. Eventually the women, along with the pastor's wife, were relieved of this kind of stewardship as the vision of the congregation improved in these matters.

2. Creation of Lutheran Church Women's Circles.

Suomi Synod pastors' wives were largely responsible for meeting the challenge of linguistic changes and other adjustments in the traditional "Ompeluseura" (Ladies Aid Sewing Groups). Isabel Maki, a youthful pastor's wife, was responsible for suggesting the circle (groups) and topic programs for the English-speaking women of Bethany Lutheran congregation of Ashtabula Harbor, Ohio in 1939. (22) The circles remained rather small to

preserve greater flexibility. General meetings, held quarterly, were intended to involve all of the women of the congregation. By the midst of the 1940 decade, this plan became the general pattern for women's work in the Suomi Synod. Younger pastors' wives identified closely with this movement, particularly because they found their own peer group in this fellowship. Pastors' wives were frequently the advisors and consultants for these auxiliaries.

3. Forms of Cooperation Between Older and Younger Women's Groups

Many pastors' wives were in congregations where cookbook projects featuring Finnish foods were produced cooperatively by the older and younger women. In Waukegan, Illinois, the women of St. Mark's Lutheran were persuaded by pastor's wife, Thyra Rautalahti, to undertake such a project in 1929. These Waukegan women augmented their own ethnic foods with recipes they had as cooks in the homes of the wealthy in Lake Forest. (23)

C. Musical Services

1. Choir directing.

Salomon Ilmonen stated in his book on the Cultural History of Finnish Americans, "Choir directing belonged to pastors' wives." He lists the names of an imposing number of such women. Frequently, the pastor's wife had begun the choir and then became one of the singers when a director became available. Lillian Tuori, pastor's wife, directed choral groups at Bethlehem Lutheran, Detroit, for 30 years.

2. Vocal Soloists and Organists

The following pastors' wives deserve special mention as singers: Sylvia Nikander, Tyyne Isaac, Aileen Tamminen, Pearl Jalkanen, Dorothy Sallmen, Lempi Merijarvi, Darley Kempainen, Ellen Joki and Jo Marie Hartman. The Sisterhood of Suomi Synod Pastors' Wives choir is remembered with special pleasure for its excellence.

Service as church organists and piano accompanists was another task that devolved upon the pastor's wife very early. Several became professionals in this, such as Toine Heikkinen, who became a faculty member in the Music Dept. of Gettysburg College, when her husband was professor in the Gettysburg Seminary. Hilda Luoma of Crystal Falls, Mi., pianist and church organist, tutored her son Reino, who was a musical prodigy. Naima Hohenthal, a pastor's wife and excellent pianist, developed a chamber orchestra of her ten children. (24) Marie Wargelin and Kaarina Wargelin received musical training at music conservatories. Sigrid Lepisto, wife of a president of Suomi College, described the opportunities that aspiring young musicians had at the music department at Suomi College under Martti Nisonen. (25)

D. "Team Ministry and Pastors' Wives

1. Many pastors and their wives developed an effective interrelatedness in serving the needs of the husband's congregation. In several respects it was like a "team ministry." In the average congregation the pastor's wife frequently had the highest sense of responsibility for greeting visitors and strangers. She was the one who noticed visitors who generally stood off by themselves after a service or function because no one noticed to talk to them. She was also responsible enough to find out who they were and share the information with the pastor and the congregation evangelism leader. The pastor's wife would also be singled out by other women of the parish, not only for socializing, but frequently to share some concern that they might have. This was because she was a woman and she was probably easier to speak to.

2. Counseling by the Pastor's Wife.

There are those who immediately see this as an illegal intrusion upon the pastoral office. Nevertheless, the Apostle Paul counseled the parishioners of the Galatian congregation, "Bear ye one another's burdens." (Gal. 6:2). A mature pastor's wife generally has an abundance of such - burdens placed inadvertently upon her. Tekla Saarinen, a pastor's wife shared some of these concerns that came to her in the journal, THE PASTOR'S WIFE. During the early days of the USA involvement in the 2nd World War, a worried mother came to her one morning seeking comfort. The woman said to Tekla, "I just had to come in and have a word with you. My heart is so heavy. What do you think of it all. I pray that none of our boys will be taken prisoner." (26) Tekla and John Saarinen lost their eldest son in the Southwest Pacific theatre of the War.

3. Social Ministry

Impi and her husband, Pastor K.V. Mykkanen, worked together to establish and manage homes for the aged, in Republic, Mich. and Sanford, Fla. (27) The prompting to do this came from exposure to the tragic despair of aged people in the parish. A visit to an elderly parishioner hospitalized in Marquette, Mich. proved to be the final motivation to do something. The aged man had no place to go. Something similar led Hannah and Hugo Hillila, wife and pastor to establish the Middleboro, Mass. rest home. Helmi and Nicholas M. Joensuu, also wife and pastor, managed this institution together for nearly two decades. Helmi Joensuu stated (article in the PASTOR'S WIFE) that it makes all the difference in the world to have people with Christian love operate a rest home for the aged. (28)

4. Pastor's Wife And Supply Preaching

Supply preaching by the pastor's wife frequently became a real necessity during the days that the average pastor had multi-parishes. She certainly did not travel the circuit, but she frequently filled in at the congregation

where the parsonage was located. Experienced lay leaders were also used. Only one pastor's wife is known to have used the pulpit for her message. She was Aino Lilja Kantonen-Halkola, who was an unusually gifted speaker. She is also known to have been a frequent guest speaker in churches of other denominations. (29) Alma Hinkkanen-Lipsanen was another especially gifted speaker (as well as an outstanding business woman). Ilmonen reports that in 1908 she made an extended speaking tour throughout the United States in behalf of the Finnish National Temperance Brotherhood. Her itinerary consisted of lectures at 150 temperance halls scattered about the USA; the circuit lasted 14 months! (30)

Our research reveals that there were a total of 11 wives of Church of Finland pastors and 13 wives of Suomi Synod-trained-pastors who did supply preaching while their husbands were somewhere else in their multi-parishes on Sundays. Here are a few: Thyra Hohenthal-Rautalahti, Alma Granquist-Haapanen, Sylvia Kjaldstrom-Korhonen, Hannah Mottonen-Hillila, Esther Halttunen-Hillila, Tyyne Wirtanen-Torkko, Alma Koski-Hattula, Tekla Hirsimäki-Saarinen, Isabel Taanila-Mäki, and Kerttu Laine-Kyllönen (31). The archives at Suomi College contain several manuscripts of the messages delivered by Alma Granquist-Haapanen and Thyra Hohenthal-Rautalahti. (32) The subject matter is varied.

E. CHURCH NEWS CORRESPONDENTS

Some pastors' wives carried out the duty of reporting parish news in the synodical tri-weekly newspaper, the AMERIKAN SUOMETAR. It is significant to note that the responsibility was most generally assumed after they had become widows. Probable reasons for this were: good correspondents were difficult to secure. Secondly, pastors' widows had by virtue of having been in parish affairs become especially observant of news worthy items. Thirdly, it was a meaningful thing to do in the altered state of their life. A few examples of such women are: Hannah Hillila, Eva Karlin, Kerttu Kyllönen, Alma Hattula, and Martha Waltari. Waltari also penned a very descriptive article for the KIRKOLLINEN KALENTERI on congregational life in the Synod during the late 1920s. (33) Other pastors' wives also wrote articles for the various publications of the Synod. The bibliography for this paper contains many such examples. (See note 18)

F. Entertaining in the Parsonage

We have earlier mentioned the type of entertaining the pastors' wives did for their own parishioners. However, there was also a considerable amount of hospitality that ^{was} done for the benefit of out-of-town visitors

from Finland, dignitaries such as bishops, professors, artists and writers. Parishioners of congregations, where parsonages were located, assumed that these guests would be entertained and housed in the parsonage. However, it was also true that parishioners in isolated congregations and preaching places did provide hospitality to their own parish pastor or visiting pastors. Isabel Maki, whose husband served in several parishes of the Synod, acknowledged that parsonage guests did bring a refreshing change into parsonage life and were frequently "angels unaware." However, she observed that the same benefits could have been enjoyed by others also. ⁽³⁴⁾ Marie Hoikka-Wargelin reminded her family occasionally of the time when she entertained a bishop from Finland as guest in the parsonage while being involved in the festivities as a piano soloist. She also recalled a similar "tight situation" when she entertained a Finnish operatic star and served as the singer's accompanist at a series of concerts in the area. ⁽³⁵⁾ Pastors' wives, who responded to the questionnaire sent to them, largely indicated that there had been a considerable amount of obligated hospitality imposed upon them. Understandably, their answers differed.

II. Services Performed by Pastors' Wives to the Conference and Synod

A. Representation on Boards and Committees

The Synod was very slow in electing women to boards and committees on the Conference and Synodical level. We have alluded earlier to the granting of voting rights to women of the Synod in 1909. Initially opportunities to serve came slowly and pastors' wives were the first to benefit. Both Alma Haapanen and Thyra Rautalahti were elected to serve on the Board of Directors of Suomi College, 1912 and 1922 respectively.

B. Pastors' Wives as Faculty or Administrative Staff at Suomi College

Alma Haapanen, Erika Ruth Niemi, Ruth Pousi-Ollila and Kaarina R. Wargelin served on the faculty of Suomi College while Sanna Nikander, Martha Hanninen and Tyyne Isaac served on the administrative staff.

C. Pastors' Wives as Editors of Synod Publications

Alma Haapanen served on the editorial staff of several parish education books published by the Synod, (namely LUKUKIRJA I & II, as well as PYHAKOULU ⁽³⁶⁾ OPAS). Kaarina R. Wargelin edited the Synod's parish education paper for children, (THE MESSENGER) as well as FAVORITE FINNISH HYMNS (English arrangements of Finnish songs and hymns). Aino Lilja Halkola, Ida Kaskinen, Tyyne Isaac and Kaarina R. Wargelin served the Synod on the Translation Committee for Finnish hymns the Synod submitted to the Joint Lutheran Hymnal Committee of the SERVICE BOOK AND HYMNAL.

III. Community Services Rendered by Pastors' Wives

While community involvement by pastors' wives developed slowly as the Synod shook of its ethnic shell, these women had active involvement in relief work for Finland and the United States. They led the women of their congregations into relief work for Finland and also in doing Red Cross bandage work for the United States. Leaders, such as, Martha Hanninen, Alma Haapanen and Thyra Rautalahti assumed leadership in HELP FINLAND INC. and the MANNERHEIM CHILDRENS PROTECTIVE SOCIETY. Kaarina Wargelin spoke to numerous women's organizations in northern California for HELP FINLAND, INC. She was also involved in publicizing the benefit concert of violin prodigy, Heimo Haitto, at the Oakland Public Auditorium in 1940.⁽³⁷⁾ Several congregations had Red Cross auxiliaries. In parts of the country where American service men were quartered, pastors' wives helped their congregations to participate in Lutheran Service Center programs by providing food and personnel. As the vision of cooperative activities grew, Synod pastors' wives broadened their contacts and participation in other forms of community activity.

IV. Suomi Synod Pastors' Wives Coping With Stress

No study was ever made relating to the pressures endured by Suomi Synod pastors' wives. Neither has their ability to cope been studied. When one considers the complex roles they fulfilled (wife, mother, manager of a "public" parsonage, participant in numerous congregational responsibilities) it would seem natural to assume that the incidence of breakdowns and illnesses among these women would be very high. Remarkably, this was not so. ⁽³⁸⁾

There was also the pressure to manage on a limited income. Two-income-families did not become common until after the Second World War. Married women were not allowed full-time employment as teachers. The Consistory made a study in 1952 of pastors' salaries in the Synod, which revealed the average salary (with parsonage, without utilities, pension, and mileage) to be two hundred dollars a month. Founder of the Synod, Dr. J.K. Nikander stated, in a letter to his mission director in Finland, that his salary (1885) was sixty dollars a month. A neighboring LCMS pastor told him, "One should not come here to collect large salaries!" ⁽³⁹⁾

Some pastors' wives tried to supplement their family income by giving piano lessons at .50 cents an hour. The compensation for choir directing or playing the organ per month was either 25 or 30 dollars a month even in the late 1940s. Earlier generations of Synod pastors' wives did knit as well as sew garments for their families. The average parsonage family (1890 to 1962) was 3.2 children. However, the average Synod parsonage family during the early years had many more children than was the custom towards the end

A. The Sisterhood of Suomi Synod Pastors' Wives and Coping

The motivation for the formation of the Sisterhood of Suomi Synod Pastors' Wives sprang from the need of these women to have their own support group. Church conventions in the pioneer days were the only events which provided opportunities to meet on a national basis. The sense of belonging to a group which realistically affirmed their common calling led the relatively few pastors' spouses, attending the 25th Anniversary Convention of the Synod in 1915, to organize a support group. The founding group consisted of thirteen women; Sanna Nikander (wife of the Synod president; elected chair person), Martta Kuusi (secretary), Hanna Pesonen (treasurer), Thyra Rautalahti, Alma Lipsanen, Hilja Hartman, Liisa Wuornos, Eva Samanen, Selma Luttinen, Selma Kortesmaki, Helmi Koivumaki, Alma Haapanen and Marie Wargelin.

The Sisterhood's stated purpose was: "to bring the members, scattered all over the United States, into a closer relationship with each other so that by mutual understanding and love they would strengthen and encourage each other in their noble but often difficult calling." ⁽⁴¹⁾ The words "noble but often difficult calling," aptly describes the milieu in which these pastors' wives lived and worked. These women commenced at once to demonstrate the depth of their commitment one to another. Alma Haapanen, the wife of long-time synodical president, Dr. Alfred Haapanen, described this commitment in a résumé of the minutes of the 40th anniversary of the Sisterhood, "We have always tried to keep in mind the purposes of the Sisterhood and aimed to fulfill its purposes." ⁽⁴²⁾

In order to provide greater unity and support for its members, the Sisterhood established a 12-page newsletter, THE PASTOR'S WIFE. It appeared twice a year. The newsletter always included articles which dealt with the role of the pastor's wife. The Fall issue of the 1940 PASTOR'S WIFE, contained a significant listing of the various subjects dealt with over the years. ⁽⁴³⁾ The Sisters exchanged news items about their families in the newsletter. It was reassuring for them to know what had taken place in the home of the other sisters. They also shared recipes and household time-saving hints. Sometimes they gave program suggestions for church use. However, the most significant items in the newsletters were those in which the Sisters encouraged one another by sharing personal experiences of faith. Frequently this "soul care" was done in the form of poetry, written by the Sisters or discovered in their reading. Aino Lilja Halkola, Ida Kaskinen and Impi Mykkanen were the most frequent contributors of such poems. Halkola and Kaskinen each wrote one of the two "Sisterhood Songs." These songs (and others) were sung by Sisterhood Choir at Synod Conventions. Their singing was one of the high points of Suomi Synod conventions. ⁽⁴⁴⁾

- B. Pastors' Family Fellowship Meetings and Coping

Pastors' Family fellowship gatherings were great favorites of the pastors' spouses. The meetings were held wherever the Synod had several congregations reasonably near each other. The practice dated from the early 1920s and continued to the end of the Synod's existence. The gatherings provided pastors and wives opportunities to gain professional edification, strong ties, and enduring supportive relationships. The get-togethers also included the children and thus provided opportunities for "preacher's kids" to get acquainted with each other. Although the pastor's wife (in whose home a meeting was held) had an additional burden, she could look forward with anticipation to the next several rounds of get-togethers.⁽⁴⁵⁾ In parish settings it was possible for most pastors' wives (whose turn it was to entertain) to receive help from women of the parish. These dinners were always events in themselves.

C. Poetry and Cultural Events As Means of Coping.

A surprisingly large number of Sisters gained meaning and expression for their inner feelings through poetry. Obviously, this poetry was not just anything. Frequently it was a significant act of creativity. People of Finnish extraction are particularly apt in writing poetry. The poetic quality of the Finnish language lends itself naturally to such usage. Most issues of THE PASTOR'S WIFE contained poems contributed by various Sisters. The poems of Aino Lilja Halkola, Ida Kaskinen and Imoi Mykkanen were of excellent quality and were much appreciated.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Poetry helped overworked pastors' wives to gain renewal both physically as well as spiritually. Poetry is closely related to the seat of feelings. Finland poet, Hilja Haahti, was a universal favorite throughout the entire Synod, both in parsonages and homes of church members. Haahti was quoted frequently in THE PASTOR'S WIFE as well as in publications of the Synod. Dr. Erkki Kurki-Suonio, a rector of Johanneksen Kirkko in Helsinki, visiting former Suomi Synod congregations in the 1960s, discovered to his amazement that his mother-in-law's poetry was to be found everywhere he went.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Haahti's poetry was capable of touching the deep well-springs of faith and providing strength and comfort.

Pastors' wives who responded to our questionnaire revealed that they also found strength for coping by attending cultural and intellectually edifying events; for example, symphony and choral concerts or discussion groups.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE TRADITIONAL ROLE MODEL?

- It is germane to our study of the role model of Suomi Synod pastors' wives to note changes that have taken place with the elapse of years. Since

this study was completed 25 years after the end of the Suomi Synod, it can be assumed that there has been sufficient time for the development of perspective. The status of women has changed in Finland (as well as in the United States); the first ordinations of women in the Church of Finland took place on March 6, 1988. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ The impact of the era of two-income families began in the 1950s. Pastors' wives took advantage of this opportunity and consequently had less time to devote to church work. The income of congregations also improved and paid staff did more of the work within congregations. In addition, the final years of the Synod were characterized by pastors of diverse ethnic background. They and their wives had graduated from institutions other than those of the Synod. Obviously they brought with them some outlooks which differed from Suomi Synod traditions. All of these changed circumstances would seem to imply that the traditional role model of the Suomi Synod pastors' wives would have been greatly altered. However, this was not necessarily so.

The above conclusion is based upon sources of information which reveal that the traditional role model continued predominant to the end of the Synod. These sources of information are: photographs, back issues of the PASTOR'S WIFE, symbolic actions and points of view gleaned from the questionnaire.

1. Group pictures.

Group pictures taken of Sisterhood Conventions through the period of 1948 to 1962, all indicate that the attendance at Sisterhood conventions continued to increase.

2. THE PASTOR'S WIFE

Pictures are a superficial form of information since they do not have the ability to reveal attitudes. However, our research has indicated that 90 percent of the members of the 1948-1962 Sisterhood membership continued to affirm the traditional image by articles contributed to the newsletter. ⁽⁴⁹⁾ The spirit and intent of these articles were clearly in keeping with the traditional role model.

3. Symbolic Actions

Members of the Sisterhood, assembled at the 1955 convention of the Sisterhood, performed a significant symbolic act when they by unanimous action conferred upon Alma Haapanen the title, "kirkkokunnan äiti" (Mother of the Synod). Alma had personified this traditional role for many decades. ⁽⁵⁰⁾

4. What Ministry In The Congregations Meant To Pastors' Wives?"

(SECTION V, # 5 of questionnaire; (See Appendix)

CONCLUSION

Impi Mykkanen's greeting to the Sisterhood assembled in convention in 1960 spoke some symbolic words for the Sisters, "God called us to this work and it is not for us to run away from it or allow difficulties to overcome us." (51) It can be said that the large majority of the of the pastors' wives agreed with that traditional interpretation. Furthermore, they felt that being a pastors wife was a satisfying and meaningful vocation.

NOTES

1. Wargelin, R.W., "Social and Theological Profiles of the Suomi Synod Ministerium, 1890--1962; unpublished but copyrighted manuscript, 1987.87.

2. Ibid.

3. Ilmonen, Salomon, AMERIKAN SUOMALAISTEN SIVISTYSHISTORIA, # I, (Cultural History of Finnish Americans, # 1; contains a section describing the moral conditions prevailing among Finnish Americans during the 1880 era; pages 30-34). J. K. Nikander's letters in DEAR UNCLE, page 53 has other examples.

4. Potti Kalle, ILOINEN HARBORI (Happy Harbor); publisher and date unavailable. Copy available in the FAHA archives at Suomi College.

5. Salovaara, Kaarlo, memoirs of a pioneer pastor of Suomi Zion Lutheran Congregation, Fairport Harbor; RAITTIUS KALENTERI, Book Concern, Hancock, MI., 1902.

6. Wargelin, R.W., DEAR UNCLE (see letter for Jan. 19, 1885, page five.)

7. Ilmonen, Salomon, 25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FINNISH NATIONAL TEMPERANCE BROTHERHOOD, 1912, pages 136--137. See also Ilmonen's volume listed above, pages 178-180 for descriptions of temperance halls "take overs"; these take-overs meant that congregations were also affected.

8. Kaarina R. Wargelin described her mother, Thyra Rautalahti's, custom of serving coffee to visitors who came to the parsonage for church rites.

9. Ahlman, Lauri, gives a meaningful interpretation of Aliisa Tolonen's work in the Ishpeming Bethel Lutheran congregation (1886 to 1902). Article is to be found in the 40th Anniversary, Suomi Synod, 1930.

10. V. Rautanen and Salomon Ilmonen provide valuable information about Liisi Kivioja's activities in church and community in AMERIKAN SUOMALAINEN KIRKKO (p. 114) and the 25 ANNIVERSARY OF THE FINNISH NATIONAL TEMPERANCE BROTHERHOOD (pages 100-101).

11. A photograph (courtesy of Tapio Holvitie current member of the Finnish Parliament) of the members of the first unicameral Parliament of Finland in 1907, portrays Liisi Kivioja with all the other members of that historic body.

12. Information about pastors' wives is to be found in SUOMI SYNOD MINISTERIUM, 1890--1962.

13. Minutes of the 19th Suomi Synod Convention; FAHA Archives.archives

14. Information based upon data in SUOMI SYNOD MINISTERIUM, 1890-1962; FAHA archives at Suomi College.
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16. Ilmonen, Salomon, see note # 3; pages 148-162. Ilmonen lists women pastors' wives involved in parish education.
17. Krym, Elma, "The Finnish American Church Woman;" KIRKOLLINEN KALENTERI, 1976, page 122.
18. Kuusisto, Siiri, "Pyhäkoulu ja Nuoriso," (Sunday School and Youth); SUOMI OPISTON JUHLAJULKAISU; JUHANNUSLEHTI, 1928.

Halkola, Aino Lilja, "Pyhäkoulun aatteellisesta merkityksestä," (The Educational Value of Sunday School); USKONPUHDISTUKSEN MUISTOLEHTI, 1932.

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Rautalahti, Thyra, "Naisten osuus koulumme kannattamisessa ja kehittämisesä," (Women's Share in Developing and Supporting Our College); USKONPUHDISTUKSEN MUISTOLEHTI, 1941.

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19. SUOMI SYNOD MINISTERIUM; 1890-1962; information about Martha Saarinen-Asuma.
20. Krym, Elma, see reference no. 17.
21. The writer's recollections of Suomi Zion Lutheran congregation, Fairport Harbor, Ohio.
22. Maki, Isabel, "Bethany Sisters"; KIRKOLLINEN KALENTERI, 1940.
23. Rautalahti, Thyra, BOOK OF RECIPES BY WOMEN'S CLUB OF THE FINNISH LUTHERAN CHURCH, (presently St. Mark Lutheran of Waukegan, Ill.) (1929).
24. Personal recollection of Kaarina R. Wargelin.
25. Lepisto, Sigrid M., "Suomi Opiston urkurilukkari kurssi," (Cantor-Organist Training offered at Suomi College); JUHANNUSLEHTI, 1929.
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28. Joensuu, Helmi, "Greeting to the Sisters;" 25th anniversary issue of THE PASTOR'S WIFE, Spring, 1960.
29. Recollections of the writer.
30. Ilmonen, Salomon, see note # 3; page 116 concerning Alma Hinkkanen-Lipsanen.
31. Wargelin, R.W., "Social and Theological Profiles of the Suomi Synod Ministerium," see Chart IX.
32. Manuscripts (plus others not named here) of Alma Haapanen and Thyra Rautalahti to be found in FAHA archives at Suomi College:
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33. Waltari, Martha, "Piirteitä 1920-luvun seurakuntatyöstä yhdysvalloissa," (Sketches of parish life in the USA during the 1920s); KIRKOLLINEN KALENTERI, 1970.

34. Maki, Isabel, "Jotain papin elämän työn käytännöllisestä puolesta," (Something About the Practical Side of the Work of a Pastor's Wife); THE PASTOR'S WIFE, Fall issue, 1948.
35. Wargelin family recollections.
36. See notes # 18 and # 32.
37. Wargelin, Kaarina R., a personal recollection.
38. Oden, Marilyn Brown, "Stress and Purpose: Clergy Spouses Today;" THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY, April 20, 1988, pages 402--404.
39. Wargelin, R.W., DEAR UNCLE; this recollection of J. K. Nikander is found in the letter for July 27, 1885.
40. Information compiled by the writer from data found in the matriculum, SUOMI SYNOD MINISTERIUM.
41. Wargelin, Kaarina R., "A Brief History of the Suomi Synod Ministers' Wives' Sisterhood from 1915 --1962; presented at the last gathering of the Sisterhood, Detroit, Mi., 1962.
42. Alma Haapanen's comment is to be found in the Spring issue, of the 1955 PASTOR'S WIFE.
43. Topics discussed at annual conventions of the Sisterhood, 1918 through 1939. Listing from Fall issue of THE PASTOR'S WIFE, 1940.
 - 1918--"Relationship of the pastor's wife to the congregation. (Alma Haapanen)
 - 1920--How do we find strength to work in the congregation? (Selma Luttinen).
 - 1923--Responsibilities of the pastor's wife? (Presenter's name not given).
 - 1923--How can we enrich ourselves spiritually? (Tekla Saarinen).
 - 1925--The Difficulties of the pastor's wife. (Laina Kantonen-Ranta).
 - 1925--To what degree does the success of the pastor depend upon his wife? (Helmi Koivumaki).
 - 1928--Deaconess work and the pastor's wife. (Sylvia Korhonen).
 - 1930--The pastor's wife's position and her responsibilities. (Alma Lipsanen).
 - 1930--Minna Canth. (Eva Karlin).
 - 1931-- Ruth and Naomi. (Tyyne Isaac)
 - 1931--True Friendship. (Alma Haapanen).
 - 1932--Florence Nightingale. (Helmi Ranta)
 - 1933 The place of Finnish language in the Sunday schools. (Sivia Tammisto)
 - 1935--The lady of the parsonage. (Siiri Kuusisto)
 - 1935-- The pastor's wife and how she divides her time for the congregation, her family and the community. (Presenter not named)
 - 1936--How we can control the amount of time we spend in congregational work? (Thyra Rautalahti).
 - 1937--The pastor's wife as mother to her family. (Leah Koski).
 - 1937--The goal of Finland's women theologians. (Alma Lipsanen)
 - 1938--Prevailing prayer. (Tekla Saarinen).

1939-Psalm 139:23. (Olga Koski).

DISCUSSION TOPICS GLEANED FROM LATER ISSUES

1947-"Conditions in Finland After WW.II;(Alma Haapanen)

1948- "Practical Work of the Pastor's Wife," (Isabel Maki)

1960-"We Are God's People," (A Bible Study based on the Book of Esther). (Tekla Saarinen)

44. Halkola, Aino Lilja, "Pappien Emäntien Laulu," (Pastor's Wife's Song); music by Martti Nisonen.

Halkola, Aino Lilja, "In Thy Service" (Sisterhood Song); music by Göte Stransjö.

Kaskinen, Ida, "Pappien Emäntien Huokaus," The Sigh of the Pastor's Wife.

45. "A Meeting of the Pastors' Families in the Ohio Pa. Conference;" Spring issue of THE PASTOR'S WIFE, 1940.

46. Other examples of Halkola's, Kaskinen's and Mykkänen's poetry can be found in 1949, 1956 and 1960 issues of THE PASTOR'S WIFE.

47. Kurki-Suonio, Erkki, "Hilja Haahti, suomalaisten kotien kirjailija," (Haahti, poet of Finnish homes); KIRKOLLINEN KALENTERI; 1973.

48. Häyrynen, Leena, "Sovelias Ies, Keveä Kuorma," (Easy Yoke and Light Burden; an interview of Doctor of Theology, Pirkko Lehtiö, Exec. Secretary of the Helsinki Diocese following the March 6th, 1988 ordination of women; KUVALEHTI, April 3, 1988, (pp. 2--7).

49. Information was gathered by going through all of the issues of THE PASTOR'S WIFE from 1940 through 1962.

50. The honoring of Alma Haapanen is recounted in the 1955 Spring Issue of THE PASTOR'S WIFE.

51. Mykkänen, Impi, "A Greeting to the Sisterhood", 25th anniversary issue of THE PASTOR'S WIFE, 1960.

A P P E N D I X

A. Group Who Became Pastors' wives between 1883 and 1920

"The Church was important to both (husband and wife). They both believed in their mission to people.....As a mother, she lived both lives, mothering and helping with the congregation."

"She was the right hand of her husband.....along with being a mother of five, her husband traveled back and forth across the United States.....using pioneer transportation. She filled in for her husband in the parish during his travels."

"Being a pastor's wife gave her a real sense of calling in the Lord's work."

"It afforded the pastor's wife an avenue of expression and use of her talents often denied lay women of that age."

"It was natural to be a helpmate."

"It enriched my personal life and gave me renewed strength for each day."

B. GROUP WHO BECAME PASTORS' WIVES BETWEEN 1921 and 1945

"I enjoyed it and was happy doing it because I felt that I was serving my Saviour as well as helping the man I loved."

"Growing in faith and spirit and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His love; especially as a deaconess."

"Mostly glad to be able to help."

"She wanted to serve in God's Kingdom",

"Gave me a sense of expression in faith, training and professionalism."

"Tradition in the Suomi Synod strongly suggested that a wife be involved in the life of the congregation. As a committed Christian, I wanted to be involved. However, the nature of the involvement would probably have been different had I not been a pastor's wife."

"I felt it was a privilege to help wherever I could, to be a helpmate and encouragement to my husband. We were in the ministry together."

C. Group who Became Pastors' Wives between 1946 and 1962

"I enjoyed working side by side with my husband. It gave me personal satisfaction to use my talents for the glory of God and to help in the congregation's program."

"I have been trying to help my husband in any way I could. At the same time I have been trying to encourage lay leadership. As an avenue of serving Christ, I have found the ministry most fulfilling and meaningful."

"To be as helpful as possible."

"Freedom to serve as God directed, using the gifts and talents I possess."

"At first, I felt it was a "duty" in the service of the Lord, but later in our ministry, when it became clear that we needed to accept Christ as our personal Saviour and Lord (as opposed to having head knowledge about Christ) I felt it was a "privilege" to serve Him in the ministry."

"Never did I experience a "concept" that I was "employed" to be anything but my husband's wife. I was one among many offering my gifts and encouragement in the common mission of the parish."

"All through the ministry, I have felt that I am to be myself and work with the gifts God gave me. To be faithful, understanding, gracious and to serve in love."

"It felt good to be needed and to work as a team with my husband."

"In our Navy (chaplain) life our home was open to the sailors on a regular (drop-in) basis for weekly Bible studies and meals and lodging. This was an important part of our ministry and as a witness to the love of Christ. This is also an aspect of our life that has some of the best memories and friendships for our children."

"I have never felt compelled to serve as my husband's assistant, nor has he required this of me, but my concept of my role as pastor's wife was one of support more than leadership. I have always been an active congregation member, assisting my husband with the social expectations required of a pastor's wife."